



PROPHECY UPDATE 2024 CONVERGENCE! PART 2



In part 2 of our study this evening we are going to be dealing with some of the false teaching that is related to the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And we will conclude with what our response should be in the days we are living in or how we are to live out our faith during these days!

Now let me say this.

There are those who think we should not be concerned or teach about Bible prophecy.

They believe that this is a distraction from what we are supposed to do.

But listen to what C. S. Lewis wrote and I think you will be encouraged. He wrote, *“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next . . . It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”*

I agree. Because we not only look forward to a life with Jesus, but it causes us to minister to people here on earth and share the Gospel message with them. You can't be any earthly good until you are heavenly minded!

That is what Paul said in Colossians 3:2-4, **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Now think about this for a minute. If more than 25% of the Bible deals with prophecy, do you think God wants us to understand it or was this just some filler for the Bible?

Of course God wants us to understand Bible prophecy! In fact, Jesus held the Jewish people responsible for not knowing Bible prophecy. He said in Luke 19:42-44, “. . . ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”

I think that is very clear. Understanding what God has said regarding the days we are living in is very important.

But why?

Listen to what we are told in Isaiah 44:6-8, “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.’”

Almighty God knows what the future holds, what is going to come to pass and no one else can predict the future like He does! There is *NONE* who can!

Why does God tell us what the future holds?

There are two main reasons.

The first is this – “*DO NOT FEAR, NOR BE AFRAID.*”

You see, not only does God tell us the future, but He is the One who holds the future in His hands. He is in control!

In knowing that, what should our response be?

What does God want us to do?

He tells us – ***“YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.”***

You see, because God has told us what is going to come to pass, we do not need to be afraid. But this world is nervous, they are wondering what is happening and thus, we can be a witness of how much God loves them and died for them so that they can live with Him. We don't need to be afraid or worry, God is still on the throne, and He is in control!

But people are worried.

One wrote, ***“I have severe anxiety over the end of the world. What Bible prophecies need to be fulfilled before it happens? How many are there?”***

Another wrote, ***“I'm having terrible anxiety about the end times as described in the Book of Revelation, can someone console me? As a believer in Jesus do I have anything to worry about?”***

So we see unbelievers and even some believers are worried about the end of the world. And God has spoken to us about the days we are living in, and we should give people the reason for the hope that we have and not be fearful or afraid of what is happening or what is coming.

In other words - ***“DO NOT FEAR, NOR BE AFRAID . . . YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.”***

Here is something that is troubling me and that is there are those Christians that are coming up with end times doctrine that is not Biblical, and they are taking that hope away regarding the coming of the Lord for His Bride the Church.

They truly believe that the Church will go through the Tribulation Period!

That is why I want you to understand that the Lord will Rapture His Bride, the Church to be with Him before He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world and He deals with the nation of Isarel once again and they will come to saving faith!

So that is what we will be looking at next.

PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE

You see, I want to start out with the Rapture of the church and the timing of the Rapture of the church because many are coming against this teaching, and we need to know how to defend our faith.

Listen to some of these emails coming against those who believe in the Rapture of the church and that this event will happen before the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

“The pretribulation rapture is heretical and speculative.”

People read that and they may come to the conclusion, ***“Maybe this person is right!”***

Not at all. How do they deal with the verses that teach about believers being caught up to meet the Lord in the air? We will look at these in a few minutes, but the Rapture is not heretical nor speculative as you will see!

“You pretribulationist barely understand the ‘First Principles’ of the Word of God.”

Again, putting down those who believe what the Word of God is telling us and making those who believe in the Rapture feel like fools. That is not a Christian way to deal with this issue and it truly tells me that they don’t have a leg to stand upon, and thus, they put those who believe in the Rapture down, that they are not smart!

“Pretribs suffer from the pathology of ‘escapism.’ They are ‘cowards’ – afraid to go through the tribulation period.”

Do I really want to escape what is coming?

Do I really want to go through the Tribulation Period?

Yes, I do want to escape this coming judgment upon a Christ rejecting world and no I don't want to go through this period of judgment. I read the book of Revelation, and it is not good for those who have to go through it!

“If you teach people there is a rapture you might as well just worship Satan. That doctrine causes more harm than any demon.”

If we believe in the Rapture then we are worshiping Satan, really?

What harm has this teaching of the Rapture brought to believers?

Folks, again, when you don't have a leg to stand on you make wild statements to discourage those who do believe.

And since this attack against the Rapture of the Church is growing, I want to give you the evidence you need to defend what you believe.

Let me start out with what Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 4:13-18, a passage dealing with the Rapture of the Church.

He wrote, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”**

Prior to the Rapture, *WHO* is being caught up with these dead saints who will rise first?

Paul tells us that those of us who are *ALIVE* when the Rapture occurs will be caught up with the dead and we will meet the Lord in the air!

Now when it says, **“together with them”** the Greek word for **“together”** is *HAMA*, (ham'-ah) and it is a word that deals with time. Then, the Greek word for **“with”** is *SUN*, (soon) and this word speaks of space.

Thus, what Paul is saying is that we will all arrive together at the same time and be together in the same space – with the Lord!

And *HOW* is this going to happen?

Paul tells us that we are going to be **“caught up”** or *HARPAZO*, (har-pad'-zo) in the Greek. And this word speaks of seizing or snatching away. It is something that happens very quickly, in the twinkling of an eye!

Think of it like this. We are immediately transformed when the Rapture takes place. It will take place very quickly. The twinkling of an eye can mean the time it takes for light to hit the surface of the eye till it hits the retina.

Now light travels at 186,000 miles per second, which would mean it would take 1.5 seconds for light to travel from the earth and reach the moon. The moon is 239,000 miles from the earth!

So then, in the twinkling of an eye the light would only reach 1 foot from the surface of the earth. No one will see it happen, but they will certainly see the effects!

Think about this for a minute. At the time of the Rapture millions of people will disappear in the blink of an eye. And people will take notice of this, and I think many will come to saving faith because they have heard us speaking of this event.

Now there is the New Age teaching to help explain the Rapture. They say that the evil, the cancer will be removed and guess what, they are speaking of Christians.

Others will say that it was aliens that took us away.

And with all that chaos a man will arise on the scene to deal with it, the Bible calls him – ***THE ANTICHRIST!***

Notice what the end result of all this is, we will **“meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** I Thessalonians 4:17.

And then Paul closes with these words, **“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** I Thessalonians 4:18.

Now here’s the thing. We know we will suffer persecution from the world, the Bible is clear on that.

But during the Tribulation Period we see that it is the wrath of God being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world from the opening of the first seal, through the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowl judgments, and thus, God would not pour out His wrath upon his Bride, the Church.

In fact, Jesus bore the wrath that was due us on the cross of Calvary!

Think of it like this. Before World War II started, Japan and Germany called their ambassadors home, they left America and went to their own home countries, why? Because war was about to break out and their countries wanted them to be home before war was declared!

So too with our Lord, before He declares war on this earth, before He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, He will call His ambassadors home, you and me!

Remember, this is not our home, for our citizenship is in Heaven and that is where we are called to go, to be with our Lord.

Thus, Paul tells us in Titus 2:13, “**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

That is what we are doing and in knowing He is coming back; in knowing we will be with Him, what should we do?

Paul told us, “**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**” I Thessalonians 4:18.

Let me share with you these words from Tim LaHaye. He wrote,

When I was a boy, I took a tour of [the] Henry Ford factory in Dearborn, Mich. Then we saw an electromagnetic crane move over a large railroad car filled with what seemed to be junk steel.

At the flip of a switch, everything in that car leaped up to the magnetic crane. Then I saw a strange thing: some pieces of steel fell back into the car. I waited until others had left on the tour and then climbed up to look inside and find out why these pieces fell back in.

I found they were not steel at all. Lying on the bottom of the car were some old two-by-fours, a broom handle, and some broken pieces of wood. Only objects made of the right component responded to the magnet, the rest were left behind.

- Tim LaHaye

How true that is. The Lord will take His Bride home with Him, not those who are not His Bride. That should just make sense. Now some may look like the bride, but they are not, they have not been clothed with the wedding garments that Christ has given, the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith.

But again, how do we know that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the right doctrine?

There are some who believe, as this writer says, that it is just plain foolishness to believe in this teaching because it was not something that the church taught, it is a recent doctrine. This is what he wrote,

. . . Rapture doctrine is one of the most recent "*new doctrines*" in the history of the Church. The only doctrine more recent is the invention of the sinner's prayer for salvation by Billy Sunday in 1930, which was made popular by Billy Graham in 1935.

. . . The fact that John Nelson Darby invented the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine around 1830 AD is unquestionably true. All attempts to find evidence of this wild doctrine before 1830 have failed, with a single exception: Morgan Edwards wrote a short essay as a college paper for Bristol Baptist College in Bristol England in 1744 where he confused the second coming with the first resurrection of Revelation 20 and described a “*pre-tribulation*” rapture. However Edwards ideas, which he admitted were brand new and never before taught, had no influence in the modern population of the false doctrine. That prize goes to Darby.

. . . Prior to 1830, no church taught it in their creed, catechism or statement of faith.

. . . Darby has had a profound impact on religion today, since Darby’s “secret rapture” false doctrine has infected most conservative, evangelical churches. While the official creeds and statements of faith of many churches either reject or are silent about Rapture, neither do they openly condemn this doctrine of a demon from the pulpit.

. . . While not all dispensationalists believe in the Rapture. All those who teach the Rapture also believe in premillennialism. Both groups use Israel’s modern statehood status of 1948 to be a beginning of a countdown to the end.

- <https://bit.ly/4gm30Bk>

What is interesting to note is that when a person has a misconception about Israel, that God is done with the Jewish people, then their view of End Times Theology is way off as well, and that is what we see here.

To say that there is no evidence prior to 1830 when John Nelson Darby introduced this doctrine, is fake news! Sorry, but it is. Let me show you what I mean.



We have an ancient manuscript from 373 A. D., it is from Ephraem the Syrian, or a writing derived from his teaching and is called, Pseudo-Ephraem. Thus, this manuscript is dated from 373 A. D. to 627 A. D., but long before the 1800's of Darby's day! This is what it said,

All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.

- Ephraem the Syrian (AD 373 or Pseudo-Ephraem and early seventh-century test based on Ephraem the Syrian)

Grant Jeffery writes,

While the text is attributed to Ephraem the Syrian (AD 373), his teaching was so popular in the early Byzantine church in Syria that numerous authors later wrote commentaries on his works and incorrectly attributed their later manuscripts to Ephraem the Syrian. These attributed works are designed as *pseudo* (false) if scholars are not totally convinced the books were actually written by the attributed authors. Some scholars have suggested that this text should be called Pseudo-Ephraem, while others conclude that Ephraem is the original author.

- The Popular Handbook on the Rapture, Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Ed Hindson, p. 107

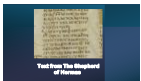
Let's look at what this early church writing teaches because it lines up with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching.

First of all, we see that **ALL** believers will be gathered together **BEFORE** the Tribulation Period begins! Notice that this writing teaches that the Tribulation Period did not begin yet, before the end of the first century!

Where will we be **TAKEN!**

It says that we will be gathered together to the **LORD!** And through this there is a clear ***DISTINCTION*** between those who are living in sin in the Tribulation Period and those who have had their sins forgiven in Christ and are with the Lord!

So, to say that Darby invented this teaching in the 1800's is foolishness, it is not true, it is fake news to support the claim that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was not taught in the church, it was!



We also have this ancient writing known as The Shepherd of Hermas (140 A. D.) and it seems to be speaking of a possible pretribulation concept of escaping the tribulation. It reads,

“You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly.”

Then there is Irenaeus from 180 A. D. who wrote the following,

“And therefore, when in the end the church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.’”

Now let me also say this about Irenaeus. Sometimes it seems like he is speaking of the church going through the Tribulation Period and other times they are removed. But as you look at this writing it seems to be saying that he believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church!

I think it is important for us to understand that the early church did speak of the Rapture before the Tribulation period and the Lord's return was eminent or it can happen at any time.

Now just because the early church taught it or believed it does not make it right. What makes it right is because that is what the Scriptures are saying, that is what the Scriptures are teaching!

Now let me show you why I believe the Scriptures teach the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church. To do that let me take you to the book of Revelation. Let's begin reading Revelation 4, starting in verse 1 where John tells us, "**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'** Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on **the throne.**" Revelation 4:1-2.

Notice that John opens up this chapter with the phrase, "**After these things . . .**" or *META TAUTA* in the Greek.

After what things?

After the things of the Church, I believe that is what John is telling us here. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 deal with the Church and Church Age!

Interestingly enough, the book of Revelation gives us an outline.

In Revelation 1:19. Jesus tells John, and us what this outline is all about. He said, "**Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.**"

Thus, the things that John *HAS SEEN*, are the events found in Revelation chapter 1. They are the things that God has shown him so far.

The *THINGS WHICH ARE*, speak of the events which are taking place now, the things of chapters 2 and 3, the things of the Church or the Church Age, as I have said.

Keep in mind that these letters Jesus wrote to these seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, modern day Turkey, actually existed during the time of John.

But as you read these letters you will see that they also portray church history from the first century up and through today.

And lastly, this book is divided into *THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS*, or after the Church Age comes to a close, the age of grace. You see, it is the same Greek word used in Revelation 4:1, *META TAUTA*.

And thus, we see the last division of this book divided like this. Chapters 4-18 deal with the events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ, including the seven years of tribulation.

Chapter 19 deals with the Second Coming.

Chapter 20 deals with the aftermath and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

And chapters 21 and 22 deal with the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth.

Look again at Revelation 4:1. As the Church Age comes to an end, John sees a door open in heaven. And then a voice, *LIKE* a trumpet is calling to him to come as God will show him what *WILL* or *MUST* transpire after the Church is removed from the earth.

Please understand these are not chance events or accidents, but it is God's divine will!

Then, as you move on to Revelation 4:2, notice what takes place as soon as John heard the sound like a trumpet calling him, *IMMEDIATELY* he was transported to the throne of God!

He was in the presence of God. This should remind us of what Paul said to the Corinthian church in I Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 50, where we read, **“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:50-57.

In the twinkling of an eye, immediately we are transformed, as I have said already. Instantaneously it will take place!

You see, these bodies must be changed because these physical bodies of flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

Thus, we all will be changed, or a metamorphosis will take place. Like a seed when it changes into a flower, or a caterpillar when it changes into a butterfly, these bodies will be changed so they can enter God’s Kingdom.

All those who have died in Christ and all those who are living in Christ will be changed in a moment, a twinkling of an eye, as we are caught up to be with the Lord in the air and thus, we will always be with Him!

Now here is a definition of what we believe the Scriptures are teaching, the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church. In this view, we say that all true believers in Christ will be caught up in the air with Christ. That is ***ALL*** believers throughout the Church Age, living or dead.

They will receive their eternal heavenly bodies as we have seen. Then following the Rapture of the Church, we see the Tribulation Period, which leads into the return of Christ, which leads into the Millennial Kingdom and finally a new heaven and earth.

In Revelation 3:10, Jesus' letter to the church in Philadelphia, the faithful church, said, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

This is important for us to see and understand. Jesus said, **“... I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

That word, **“from”** is the Greek word ***EK*** and it means ***“out of.”***

In other words, this trial that is coming upon the earth dwellers, not Christians for our citizenship is in heaven, has a definite period of time, and here it is spoken of as the, **“... hour of trial ...”** which speaks of the last 7-year period known as the Tribulation Period or the 70th week of Daniel.

God will keep us **“out of”** this period of time for God does not appoint us to wrath, but to salvation!

As Jesus said in Luke 21:34-36, **“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”**

The only reason we are worthy to escape this judgment is because of what Christ has done, not what we have done! But for the earth dwellers, those living on the earth, it will be a snare for them *ALL!*

Like I have said, our citizenship is in heaven, we are not earth dwellers, and this judgment is for those who have rejected Christ, not His Bride, the Church!

Also, in Genesis chapter 19, before the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God because of their wickedness, righteous Lot and his family first had to be removed.

The angel said to Lot, **“Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there...”** Genesis 19:22.

The pre-requisite to the destruction of the city, Lot had to be removed!

And in II Peter 2:9 we read, **“then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”**

Thus, the pre-requisite to the Tribulation Period, I believe, is that the Church *MUST* be removed before God can pour out His wrath on a Christ rejecting world.

Why?

Paul put it like this in I Thessalonians 5:9, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Again, this is a key point. God did not appoint us to His wrath and thus, before the Tribulation Period begins, before the judgment of God is poured out, before that first seal is open, the Church is Raptured to be with the Lord!

Also, as you read the book of Revelation you will see that in the first 3 chapters of the book of Revelation the Church is mentioned some 18 times.

Then we don't see the Church on earth again until we return with Christ in Revelation 19:7-14.

During chapters 4 through 18 we see that when the Church is mentioned they are in heaven.

Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying here. The Church has and will endure trials that come upon them, that is the trials of this world! But they will not experience God's wrath which is being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

That is what the Tribulation Period is all about, besides God dealing with the nation of Israel.

Thus, with the start of the 70th week of Daniel, the beginning of the Tribulation Period, the Church will be home with the Lord.

And with that line of demarcation, the Rapture of the Church, we also see the beginning of **“the Day of the Lord.”**

And the Day of the Lord begins with the introduction of God's wrath being poured out and it extends through the Millennial Kingdom.

Thus, with the Rapture we see the Day of Grace end and the Day of the Lord begin, the time of Jacob's trouble, according to Jeremiah 30:7.

David Breese says this regarding the difference between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

“The rapture, therefore, comes before the tribulation, and takes Christians out of this world before that seven-year period of the wrath of God. Notice that, in the Rapture, Christ does not come all of the way to this world. Rather, Christians are caught up to meet Him in the air (I Thes. 4:17). At the second coming of Christ, His glorious return, He comes with His saints. In fact, He returns with an army from heaven for the conquest of the world (Rev. 19:11-16). Remember, in that this is an army of His saints (Jude 14), you and I will be a part of that glorious conquest that centers on the return of Christ in power.”

- David Breese

Why am I making such a big deal about this, the Rapture of the Church? There are certainly many other things we can be looking at. That is true, but Paul said in I Thessalonians 4:13, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren . . .”**

Why is that so important? Because Paul wants to give us a hope about the future, that the Lord is coming back and those who have died prior to the Rapture and those who are living at the time of the Rapture will be gathered together and we will meet the Lord in the air! He does not want us to be ignorant about the Rapture!

Now there are those who would argue that the word **“rapture”** is not in the Scriptures.

That is true, the word **“rapture”** is not in the Bible, it was taken from the Latin Vulgate, the Latin word **RAPTURUS** is used for **“caught up”** and from that word we get our English word **RAPTURE** from.

And some will argue that this is not what this word means, but it has been altered to fit what we want it to say.

Some believe it just means that we too who are alive will be with our dead family and friends one day!

Here is the problem with that kind of thinking. That same Greek word is used for Phillip being caught up (harpazo) in Acts 8:39. He was snatched away!

Also, Paul in II Corinthians 12:2 (harpazo) was taken up. He too was snatched away!

You see, they were taken away, just as the church will be caught up or taken away to be with the Lord as He comes for His Bride!

Make no mistake about it, the rapture of the church is clearly spoken of in the Scriptures as Paul is trying to comfort these believers about the day of the Lord, something that they will not be a part of because the Lord will come for them before the Day of the Lord, or the Tribulation Period begins.

And notice how Paul closes out I Thessalonians chapter 4. He wrote, “**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**”

These should be very comforting words to us unless we are going through the Tribulation Period, and we are not.

Before the judgment begins and that first seal opened by Jesus, we will be caught up, raptured to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We could have spent much more time on this, but hopefully you have the evidence to defend what the Bible teaches – ***THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH*** – or that the Church will be removed before the Tribulation Period begins.

I want to cover one more topic before I close and that is – ***REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY!***

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

Some of you may not be aware of what this means, so let me give you some insight and then we will look at why this is not a Biblical teaching. We are told,

Replacement theology (also known as supersessionism and fulfillment theology) essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Adherents of replacement theology believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel . . .

Replacement theology teaches that the church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian church, not in Israel. The prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God's blessing for the church.

- <https://bit.ly/4fhu9EQ>

Why is there such a push for replacement theology today?

Because many believe that the Jews broke God's covenant with them and thus, God is done with them!

First of all, we need to understand that there were conditional covenants that God made with Israel and if they broke them there were consequences that came upon them.

And for those who see these promises of God as a conditional covenant, that means that there is no Biblical support for the rebirth of the nation of Israel, that occurred in 1948 when Israel became a nation again.

And what replacement theology does is it causes antisemitism as Thomas Ice points out for us as he wrote, ***“wherever replacement theology has flourished, the Jews have had to run for cover.”***



And we have seen that in America, around the world, and in churches today who hold to this teaching because, to them, God is done with Israel and thus, the land is no longer theirs!

And yes, there are those conditional covenants there were made with the Jewish people, ***“Obey Me [which is the condition], and I will bless you [the promise].”***

But there are also the unconditional covenants that God made with His people that were not based upon the faithfulness of the Jewish people but the faithfulness of God!

We see this played out in Genesis chapter 15. It is here that God gives to Abraham and his descendants the land of Israel. This was a unilateral covenant or an unconditional covenant as you will see.

In this chapter we see that God made a covenant with Abram. But please understand that it was not that God and Abram made a covenant together because then this covenant would be based upon the faithfulness of God and of Abram, and it would never work!

One author put it like this as he wrote, ***“This was an unconditional, unilateral covenant. God (with astounding condescension) was symbolizing that if He were to break his word, He would be sundered (cut in two) like the butchered animals. It was an acted-out curse, a divine self-imprecation guaranteeing that Abram’s descendants would get the land or God would die. And God cannot die!”***

Another wrote, *“This covenant God signed alone; Abram did not haggle with God over the terms. God established and Abram accepted. Abram could not break a contract he has never signed!”*

Why is this so important to us?

Because there is another covenant made by God alone for us. It is a unilateral covenant or a one-party covenant that is based upon His faithfulness and not ours and that is our salvation!

You see, our salvation is not based upon our good works, our efforts, but upon the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary!

Just as Abram and his descendants didn't deserve this land, neither do we deserve salvation, but God freely gives it to us in Christ!

So, in spite of what they say about the land not being Israel's because of their rejection of the Messiah, of Jesus, that is not true. This was a unilateral covenant based on the faithfulness of God and not of the Jewish people. He gave them the land! We are seeing the Jewish people back in the land of Israel just as God promised them!

Now, let me show you that Israel is not the church, and the church is not Israel.

In I Corinthians 10:32 we are told, **“Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.”**

You see, there is **“the Jews”** and there is **“the church of God.”** And we also see this in the book of Acts where the word **“Israel”** is spoken of 20 times and the word **“church”** is used some 19 times! Both are mentioned!

What that means is that the early church understood that the Jewish people, Israel, existed alongside the church, they were not the same!

The church was not considered to be a part of the new Israel or spiritual Israel!

James Montgomery Boice wrote in his commentary on Romans regarding Israel and the Jewish people,

But it can hardly be doubted that the continuing existence of Israel as a distinct people throughout the four thousand years of her history is a striking phenomenon. Dispossessed of her homeland and dispersed throughout the world, Israel has nevertheless survived while other peoples in similar situations have not.

Coupled with the Bible's identification of the Jews as God's elect people and its many prophecies concerning their unfolding history, the preservation of Israel as a people is strong evidence for the Bible being the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

Even more than that, and much to the purpose for our study, the survival of Israel suggests that God has preserved these people through their many dispersions and persecutions not because he does not care for them, but because he *does*, and because he has a plan for the Jewish people that will unfold in blessing in the last days.

- James Montgomery Boice Romans, p. 1376

Not only that but listen to what Paul said in Romans 11:25-27, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

And notice what Paul says here.

Frist of all, he doesn't want us to be "**ignorant**" about the Jewish people because God is not done with them.

Also, he doesn't want us to "**be wise in [our] own opinion.**"

And then Paul speaks of this mystery that he is revealing to us and it is in two parts.

The first part speaks of this "**blindness**" or "**hardening**" that has happened to some of the Jewish people, part of them, and a large part of them.

There is this blindness that is temporary.

The second part of this mystery is that this blindness will continue on "**until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**"

What does that mean?

He is speaking of the last Gentile that will be saved before the Lord comes to take His Bride, the Church home, we call that the Rapture!

It is at this point that the Church Age comes to an end and guess who God will be dealing with now.

It will be His people, the Jews once again and we call this period of time not only the Tribulation Period, but it is known in the Old Testament as the 70th week of Daniel or that last 7-year period of time where God not only pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, but He will save His people, the Jews once again!

And as you look at Daniel chapter 9, the focus is God's people, the Jews, not the Church, and His Holy City, Jerusalem.

And in the end, the culmination of those seventy-weeks that are determined upon them, is that they will turn to the Messiah, to Jesus, they will be saved!

How do I know that they will turn to Jesus?

Because Paul, quoting out of Isaiah 27:9, says “**For this is My covenant with them,**

When I take away their sins.” (Romans 11:27)

How can God take away their sins?

Is it by the keeping of the Law?

No, that does not take away a person’s sins.

The only way that their sins can be taken away is just as ours are, by them coming to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

In Hosea 5:15-6:1 we may have the prayer of the nation of Israel as they call upon God once again.

We read, “**I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense [sin]. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me. Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.**”

This is saying that God at one time left His place.

When did He do that?

When He became flesh and dwelt among us.

And then we see that He will leave this “**place,**” the earth, until Israel acknowledges their sin.

What was their sin?

And note that “**sin**” is in the singular and not the plural form.

Their sin was the rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

The prerequisite to His return is their repentance and their seeking the One whom they have pierced!

In Matthew 23:37-39 Jesus tells us, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, *you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’*”**

Jesus is telling the Jewish people that judgment is coming upon them because they have rejected Him. That their house will be left desolate until they repent and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

We see here that the prerequisite to His Second Coming is as Jesus told the Jews, that they would not see Him until they say, **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”** or they call upon Jesus!

Make no mistake about it, the Jews are the centerpiece of the last days as God closes out the Church Age and will begin to work with His people once again.

And if you doubt that, then just read the book of Revelation.

Here we see two witnesses, Jews, and we know for certain one of them, is Elijah as Malachi 4:5-6 tells us, **“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

The other witness I believe is Moses.

The reason I say that is because we see Elijah and Moses with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Not only that, but Elijah represented the prophets and Moses the Law, and thus, we see represented the Law and the prophets!

It is out of their ministry that we see 144,000 Jewish witnesses, believers in Jesus. Now many like to say that this is representing the church. But God goes to great detail to show us that this is not the church, and He does this by speaking of each of the twelve tribes specifically!

There is no such thing, biblically speaking, as replacement theology and it is a doctrine that often times leads to antisemitism!

Now, in saying all that, let me finish with this – ***OUR RESPONSE!***

OUR RESPONSE

It is interesting how many things distract us from what is most important. Now you may be wondering what needs to be the focus of our life in these days we are living in.

We don't have to guess because Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 1:10 that we are "**... to wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.**"

Who are we waiting for?

We are waiting for Jesus to come back!

What is He delivering us from?

He is delivering us from the wrath that is coming. And please understand that this is the wrath of God that Paul is speaking of. And this wrath is not poured out upon the Church but upon a Christ rejecting world! He is not speaking of the persecution we face!

Thus, we are waiting for His coming!

We are not looking for the Antichrist or anything else. We are waiting for Jesus.

And we are to be ready at all times as Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:36, “**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.**”

And as the days get closer for the Lord’s return and times get more difficult, we should not fear. Paul put it like this in II Timothy 1:7, “**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**”

How can we fight against this fear that the enemy throws at us?

Paul gives us three things we can do.

First of all, God has given to us “**power**” or *DUNAMIS* in the Greek and from this word we get our English words “*dynamic*” and “*dynamite*” from.

God, by His Spirit has given to us the power we need to accomplish the work He wants us to do!

Secondly, God has given to us unconditional “**love**”, *AGAPE* love and thus, the power God has given to us is manifested in the Love we have towards others.

Lastly, God has given us a “**sound mind**” or one that is calm, self-controlled. That is the idea with this Greek word for “**sound mind.**”

There is no confusion or panic in us.

And this is very important. Know that you have eternal life.

How can I know?

Have you repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life?

If you have then you are saved!

And we can be assured of this salvation because it is based in the finished work of Jesus Christ and not what we have done.

John put it like this in I John 5:11-13, **“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”**

Now that you are saved, share that hope with others. It is as Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

And Peter admonishes us in I Peter 3:15, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”**

Also, and we touched on this, but we are not to be fearful. Jesus said in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

And in John 16:33 Jesus said, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Having a correct perspective during these last days is important because it will give us peace as we look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace!

We also should be men and women of prayer. Peter comments on this in I Peter 4:7 as he wrote, **“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”**

Absolutely!

We are also to serve, to be active and not just sit around and wait for the Lord to come. We are to be active in life. Paul put it like this in Romans 12:1, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [spiritual worship].”**

And it is especially important to fellowship with other believers to help us during these days. Paul put it like this in Hebrews 10:24-25, **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

And lastly, we need to put our trust upon the Lord. He is in control, and nothing happens without His knowledge.

As I close our study, I want you to keep in mind that the Rapture is our blessed hope, that is what Paul is speaking of in Titus 2:13, as we meet Him in the air!

I know, some don't see us being taken out before the Tribulation Period, but, as one writer put it, and let this sink it, ***“What purpose does it serve for Jesus to batter and brutalize His bride before He comes to rescue her?”***

That is not a blessed hope!

But that is not what will happen, but as Paul wrote, **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** I Thessalonians 4:16-18

